United Nations S/PV.7555

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7555th meeting
Tuesday, 10 November 2015, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mohamed Mohamed
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 5 November 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/841)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Letter dated 5 November 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/841)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/841, which contains the text of a letter dated 5 November 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the forty-eighth report of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As we have a number of participants in this meeting on this important issue, I encourage speakers to make concise interventions. To that end, let me take this opportunity to remind speakers that the presidency will use the flashing lights on the collars of the microphones to prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close.

I now give the floor to Mr. Inzko.

Mr. Inzko: I should like to express my pleasure that good people such as Ambassador Rycroft — who was present in Dayton 20 years ago — remain engaged in our common effort to take Bosnia and Herzegovina from war to lasting peace.

On 21 November, we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, the peace treaty that brought Europe's most brutal war since the Second World War, to an end. As a seemingly endless column of migrants and refugees makes it way through the Western Balkans, we are reminded of the human tragedy of war and of just how priceless peace is. The peace that Dayton brought was hard won, and it must never be taken for granted, but instead cherished and consolidated.

Anniversaries provide us with an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and to take stock of what remains to be done. So allow me to briefly recap what was achieved, primarily during the first 10 years after the war, when Bosnia and Herzegovina was the shining star of post-conflict peacebuilding and reintegration. Freedom of movement was established; a million refugees reclaimed their homes, for the first time ever after such a brutal conflict; the State Government was reinforced; the economy was stabilized; and the State judiciary was established. Three armies and three Ministries of Defence that had fought each other were brought together under State control and a single Ministry of Defence; a single intelligence service was created to the highest European standards; a unified customs service was created and is working effectively; a single currency and a single indirect taxation system were established, which underpin the State's finances; and free, generally fair and peaceful elections had become the norm.

In 2005, Bosnia and Herzegovina stood as perhaps the best example of what the wider international community can achieve when it is united in its commitment to a peace effort. There may be a need to do this again elsewhere in the world, and it is worth remembering how successful we were in Bosnia and Herzegovina when we were truly united and committed.

However, over the past 10 years, the country has not been moving in the right direction. This has been a disappointment not only for the international community, but most of all for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As we enter the third decade of the peace process, we need to raise our expectations and once again see concrete results and positive momentum. I believe that major progress will be possible in the next 10 years if we see two basic ingredients: first, the political will to deliver substantial reforms to take the country forward, and secondly, an unwavering commitment to fully respect the Peace Agreement.

This will not be easy, but it is absolutely necessary because the problems Bosnia and Herzegovina faces today are deep-rooted and systemic, reflecting

the complex bureaucracy, the weaknesses in the economy and, to be frank, the vested interests some political leaders and State-run enterprises have in a dysfunctional status quo. What is necessary is to implement a programme of serious political, social and economic reforms that will improve functionality, attract investment and create jobs. If this is done, the international community — through the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and others — stands ready to provide generous assistance to help the country get through a challenging period.

The period since my last briefing (see S/PV.7440) has seen some decidedly positive developments, as members will have seen from my latest report (S/2015/841, annex), as well as some serious difficulties, including those highlighted in the special report I submitted on 4 September. First, let me stress the positives, of which there have been several.

A written commitment with the European Union (EU) was signed and adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities in February, opening the way for the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU to enter into force on 1 June. State and Entity authorities adopted ambitious and coordinated reform agendas in the social and economic spheres, which was a major step forward. Under the astute guidance of EU Special Representative Ambassador Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, we have also seen some more concrete initial results to implement the reform agenda, the most notable of which was the adoption of a new labour law by the Federation authorities. A border treaty has been signed with Montenegro, which is an achievement of genuine regional significance. I very much hope that similar treaties can finally be signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina's other neighbours. And just last week, we saw a long-awaited joint session in Sarajevo of the Governments of the Republic of Serbia, under Prime Minister Vučić, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Zvizdić. This was a first common between the two Governments of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Given these positive developments, reflecting a genuine commitment to getting the country back on track, it is difficult to understand how, in parallel, we have seen some politicians determined to challenge the Peace Agreement and destabilize the situation in the country. In my last statement to the Security Council, I raised my concern about the adoption by the ruling party of the Republika Srpska of a declaration that threatened to hold an independence referendum in 2018. While it is only a party document that has no official value, I am nevertheless concerned by its threat to hold an independence referendum by a specified time. As I have made clear repeatedly, the Peace Agreement does not grant the Entities the right to secede, and any attempt to change the Peace Agreement requires the agreement of all three parties.

Since then we have been confronted with a more immediate and official challenge to the Peace Agreement and the long-term progress we are all so eager see. I am referring to the decision by the Republika Srpska Parliament in July to organize a referendum on whether the Republika Srpska authorities need to respect the authority and decisions of the country's central judicial institutions, as well as decisions taken by High Representatives to implement the Peace Agreement. The 28 members of the European Council said clearly in their 12 October conclusions that:

> "The holding of such a referendum would challenge the cohesion, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It would also risk undermining the efforts to improve the socio-economic situation of all Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens and to make further progress in EU integration."

The decision of the Republika Srpska National Assembly has yet to be published and to enter into force. There is still an opportunity to rectify this breach of the Peace Agreement, and I expect the Republika Srpska authorities to step back from the brink and put the referendum aside.

So where does the reform effort in Bosnia and Herzegovina stand right now, just over a year after the latest general elections? The fairest description is to say that that this is the end of the beginning. The next few months will be critical because they will reveal whether the authorities are committed to delivering on their own reform agendas. Some of the reforms will be difficult, but they will deliver new opportunities for the country and its people. The challenge for Bosnia and Herzegovina is not just one of what needs to be done; it is also a challenge of how things are done. Twenty years after Dayton, there is no denying the fact that the country all too often suffers from division. This is why it is so important that the country get back to advancing reforms in a way that fosters reconciliation and reintegration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina desperately needs to come together and to work for a common purpose. In this respect, I would like to commend some of the gesture politics displayed by the State Presidency and Council of Ministers, which have been so warmly welcomed by ordinary people. This is the positive leadership citizens want to see and we need to see much more of it. In this regard, I would like to commend the unprecedented moves made by Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić in pursuit of genuine regional and ethnic reconciliation. Indeed, tomorrow Prime Minister Vučić will, in a welcome development, visit Srebrenica for the second time this year.

Twenty years after our mission to bring lasting peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina began, there is no doubt we have come a very long way. Huge progress has been made. However, we can conclude with equal certainty that we have not yet completed the job. The future for Bosnia and Herzegovina is the European Union — not because I say so, but because this is what the democratically elected authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have consistently set out as their primary objective. Unlike what some suggested the last time I was here, this has not been forced on the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a choice they have made themselves. To the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, my message is this — a sincere and genuine offer is on the table from the European Union that provides a chance for a secure, prosperous and dignified life for current and future generations. This offer of the European Union must be seized with both hands.

For international policymakers, I would highlight two things we need to do in order to ensure success in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first is to continue to assist the country in maintaining and accelerating the positive momentum that the initiative of Minister for Foreign Affairs Steinmeier of Germany and Secretary of State Hammond of the United Kingdom — which is now an EU initiative — has been helping the local authorities to build in recent months. That momentum has to be maintained. The second is that we must stand up together to real challenges to the peace agreement, such as the referendum initiative. The drawing of borders in Bosnia and Herzegovina is behind us. No matter how hard some may try, division and secession are failed strategies that were defeated 20 years ago.

The twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement should remind the international community and the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina of just how far the country has come, and how much more can be achieved if we reinvigorate our commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina in the interest of all of its peoples, its neighbours and the whole of Europe.

The President: I thank Mr. Inzko for his briefing.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/847, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2247 (2015).

I now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for presenting his fourteenth briefing and the forty-eighth report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/841, annex) covering the period from 21 April to 21 October 2015.

It is especially alarming that the report, like those before it, refers to the threat that the historic General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed in 1995, may be called into question. Indeed, on 15 July, the Republika Srpska threatened to organize a unilateral referendum in 2018 on possible independence. That impulse towards secession, even if theoretical, seriously undermines the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the tragic events which Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced. The territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina can in no way be questioned, in keeping with the aforementioned Agreement.

Furthermore, we note with regret that insufficient efforts have been made to achieve the "5+2" agenda — the

five objectives and two conditions set for the closure of the Office of the High Representative on the ground. There can be no question of considering a withdrawal by the United Nations, NATO or the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR), all of them synonymous with restored peace and stability. The isolated attacks that have claimed a number of lives in April at the police station in Zvornik and the ethnically based incidents during the ceremony commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide are signs that the path to lasting peace and reconciliation between the communities remains long and difficult. The assistance of the international community is therefore needed.

We recall that the Srebrenica massacre of 1995, which claimed over 8,000 lives, qualifies as genocide under international law. We firmly condemn denial of that genocide by the leader of the Republika Srpska. Statements referring to the atrocities in Srebrenica as something other than genocide offend the memory of the victims of all genocides. The deliberate refusal of Republika Srpska partisans to cooperate with the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina — including, inter alia, by blocking his access to its archives — is also part and parcel of genocide denial.

We urge all the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate fully with the Residual Mechanism of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to accelerate the process of bringing the accused to trial by national tribunals. We also urge them to cooperate fully with the High Representative, in keeping with article IX of the General Framework Agreement, by granting him access to the information and official documents he needs to discharge his mandate.

The issue of refugees and displaced individuals is a central element of the comprehensive implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Despite the obligation incumbent on the authorities to create at all levels the economic, social and other conditions conducive to the harmonious return and reintegration of refugees without ethnic distinction, the latter are experiencing great difficulties in returning to their pre-war homes.

The decrease in the budget of the Office of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina by 44 per cent and of its staff by 51 per cent has had an impact on its ability to discharge its mission successfully. However, as we have already indicated, the conditions necessary for the closure of the Office of the High Representative do not seem to be present. We therefore call on all people of good will to lend their support to the activities of the High Representative.

In conclusion, Chad underscores the need for respect for the historic Dayton Agreement and all of its provisions, including the essential role played by the Office of the High Representative, NATO, and EUFOR Operation Althea in guaranteeing security and preventing a return to the starting point.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing. Bosnia and Herzegovina has maintained stability and achieved positive progress in economic development and the rule of law, which China welcomes. Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important Balkan country. Maintaining peace and stability, promoting economic and social development and ensuring the harmonious coexistence of all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the common interests of the countries of the region and the entire international community.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The international community should seize this opportunity to encourage the various ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue to consolidate their achievements in nation-building and to comprehensively implement the Dayton Peace Agreement so as to achieve greater progress in nation-building, allowing all ethnic groups to enjoy the peace dividend. China welcomes the efforts of the High Representative Inzko in advancing the Bosnian political process. We hope that he will act in accordance with his mandate and continue to play a positive role in promoting the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

China has always respected the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and believes that it should independently choose its own development path and foreign policy. The international community should respect and support the choices made by the Government and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for their own State, and make a commitment to promoting the country's national unity and achievement of economic and social sustainable development, as well as lasting peace and stability.

China welcomes the adoption of resolution 2247 (2015), extending the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation

Althea. We hope that EUFOR will continue to cooperate closely with Bosnia and Herzegovina and play a constructive role in maintaining the peace and security of the country. China is ready to work with the rest of the international community to continue to make a real contribution to the realization of lasting peace, stability and development in the country.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): We wish to thank High Representative Inzko for his briefing, and in particular for introducing the forty-eighth report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2015/841, annex). We have studied the report carefully.

We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2247 (2015), renewing the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for one year.

Nigeria is concerned about the challenges to the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Threats of secession and the dissolution of the country by political leaders are in contradistinction to the spirit of the Dayton Peace Accords. We urge public figures to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that could threaten the peace and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We reiterate our position that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not allow for secession by any Entity. All Entities must therefore pursue their legitimate interests exclusively within the framework of the united and indivisible Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The decision of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on the validity of the decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a major challenge to the integrity of the country's judicial system and, indeed, to the rule of law. The planned referendum is clearly not in consonance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace, and we support the High Representative's call for justice to be set aside.

On a more positive note, the signing of the cooperation agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia on 4 November is a significant development. We note that the focus of the agreement is on matters of sustainable development, the location of missing persons and the protection of cultural heritage. That, in our view signals, the commitment of both parties to improve their bilateral relations. We encourage them to implement the agreement in good faith.

The entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement on 1 June and the adoption of the new Federation Labour Law in July are notable and milestone achievements. We expect that they will serve to engender an improvement in the performance of State institutions going forward We urge all stakeholders to build on the existing framework for peace to consolidate stability in the country.

We note that only limited progress has been recorded in the outstanding five objectives and two conditions pertaining to the closure of the Office of the High Representative. The authorities must demonstrate greater commitment to the reform process in order to facilitate its full implementation. We also urge the authorities of the Republika Srpska to work towards the fulfilment of their obligations to provide the High Representative with timely access to official information, institutions and documents required to accomplish his mandate.

Nigeria shares the concern of High Representative Inzko over the challenges to the peace and security of Bosnia and Herzegovina linked to the increased interethnic tensions among Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. We believe that the trend can be curbed through determined efforts to promote reconciliation. Political and community leaders have a significant role to play in that regard. On the return of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war homes, we note efforts made so far in their resettlement and education. An environment conducive to their sustained return is critical to the full implementation of the return strategy adopted in 2012.

Twenty years after the Dayton Peace Accords, the international community's support to Bosnia and Herzegovina remains crucial. This support is needed in the implementation of the Peace Agreement, the reconstruction of a civil society, the attainment of economic progress and the return of refugees. We encourage all stakeholders to remain engaged in building a peaceful, stable and united country. We pay tribute to High Representative Inzko for his astute leadership, and support his call for the adequate funding and staffing of his Office.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I thank the High Representative for his briefing today, which continues to be a useful way for the Council to stay abreast of developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As noted by others, this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Today, it

is appropriate that we celebrate their success in keeping the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the past two decades, while also acknowledging the unfinished business that remains in their implementation.

Since the High Representative last briefed the Council (see S/PV.7440), the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have taken the important step of adopting the Reform Agenda. That was a significant move towards delivering on the commitment made by Bosnia's leadership to carry out necessary reforms aimed at supporting national institutions, strengthening the rule of law and improving the socioeconomic conditions of the entire population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With those goals in mind, efforts must now focus on converting a shared aspiration into shared action. The adoption of the Federation Labour Law is one example of concrete progress that should be built upon. We wish the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina well in the undertaking and welcome the European Union (EU) support to Bosnia and Herzegovina in moving the Reform Agenda forward.

Reconciliation remains a work in progress. We note with concern episodes of violence that have taken place this year, including some with an ethnic dimension. We welcome the steps taken by leaders both within Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region to address those developments. We also support the presence of the EU-led stabilization mission as a means of contributing to a stable security environment, and are pleased that the Council has acted today unanimously to reauthorize that mission.

In addition to the presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force, the Office of the High Representative retains responsibility for civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Accords. We encourage further efforts to make progress on the five objectives and two conditions set by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, which remain prerequisites for the Office closure.

As detailed by the High Representative, referenda have been proposed that challenge the authority of Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina judiciary and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. Such moves are provocative and divisive. They undermine reconciliation efforts and distract from advancing on the Reform Agenda. We hope that such proposals can be left behind as Bosnia and Herzegovina moves forward in a greater spirit of unity and inclusiveness. We believe that this is the best route to stability, peace and prosperity.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We are grateful to the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for presenting the forty-eighth report on the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace on Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/2015/841, annex). The High Representative referred to the remarkable progress achieved during the first 10 years of the implementation of the Agreement. However, according to the report presented today, the initial impetus has waned, and the challenges facing the country seem enormous indeed.

Angola reaffirms its strong support for the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the General Framework Agreement. However, we are particularly concerned at the decision taken by the Republika Srpska National Assembly to hold a referendum on jurisdiction and on the High Representative's authority. Also of concern is the threat by the Republika Srpska ruling party to hold an independence referendum in 2018 if certain demands of the entity are not met, as well as statements by several high officials calling for the secession and dissolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those acts undermine the cohesion of that multi-ethnic society and hinder national reconciliation.

The decisions and subsequent actions taken and the official statements made by the Republika Srpska authorities constitute a violation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina pursuant to the General Framework Peace Agreement.

We call on the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from the use of divisive rhetoric and to make efforts to advance national reconciliation and the integration of all ethnic communities.

Security incidents such as the one that took place during the period under review have the potential to negatively impact the overall political situation in the country and become a serious challenge to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We regret that only limited progress was made by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards meeting the benchmarks for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, the escalation of verbal attacks and

the denial of access to the official information and documentation required for the fulfilment of his mandate. The leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular the leaders of Republika Srpska, must cooperate fully with the High Representative and abide by his authority.

Regarding the positive aspects of the situation, we welcome the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union leading to the adoption of the Master Plan for Integration into the European Union and the adoption, in July 2015, of the Reform Agenda, including the new Federation Labour Law. It is our hope that these concrete steps will set Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path towards integration into the European Union and contribute to making it a united, sovereign, multi-ethnic, stable, prosperous and developed country.

The reports on the participation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina armed forces in international peace operations and the country's commitment to participate in peacekeeping missions in various countries demonstrates its ability and determination to fully integrate into the international community.

The visit paid by His Holiness Pope Francis to the country was of particular relevance. It is our hope that his message of healing and reconciliation will resonate positively in the hearts and minds of the peoples of the region.

Finally, we acknowledge the important role played by the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUFOR Althea, in supporting the country's efforts and maintaining a safe and secure environment. We therefore supported the renewal of the EUFOR Althea mandate for an additional period of 12 months, as set out in resolution 2247 (2015), adopted today.

To conclude, we commend the work accomplished by the Office of the High Representative in support of peace, security and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are confident of a better future, in the expectation that the leadership of the country will be able to look beyond the divisions of the past by advancing political, social and economic reforms and moving towards a peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me at the outset welcome and thank High Representative Valentin Inkˇ for his presence here, and express the support of the Government of Spain for his work and for his Office. We wish also to welcome the new Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Miloš Vukašinović, to whom we express the full readiness of the Mission of Spain to cooperate in any consultation he might wish to engage in on all issues relating to the Security Council. We also wish to associate ourselves with the statement to be made later by the delegation of the European Union.

We have read attentively the quarterly report (S/2015/841) and listened carefully to the presentation of the High Representative. Progress has been made over the past six months in the implementation of the five objectives and two conditions necessary for the conclusion of the mandate. Achieving all five objectives and both conditions as quickly as possible would without a doubt be the best way of marking the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. However, in order to be successful, it must be supported by all of those involved.

We deem important the fact that we have just unanimously adopted resolution 2247 (2015) renewing Operation Althea of the European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose executive mandate remains unchanged. I wish in that respect to note the positive role played by the mission, both in support of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the very important role of training and capacity-building.

Since the Council met six months ago (see S/PV.7440), Bosnia and Herzegovina has been characterized by a positive political environment, given that progress has been made on the path towards Euro-Atlantic integration, which was the choice of the citizens themselves. Indeed, the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement in June and the adoption by the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina of the Reform Agenda in July are steps in the right direction. However, it is vital that every effort be focused on translating into reality, without delay, the commitments made.

We remain concerned at the divisive rhetoric of certain political leaders and at certain initiatives, such as the announced referendum in the Republika Srpska on the applicability of the judicial power of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Spain unconditionally and unreservedly supports the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Bosnia

and Herzegovina as well as the need for political leaders to respect the rule of law and the principle of legality in all of their undertakings.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I wish to thank High Representative Inzko for his leadership of the Office of the High Representative and his crucial efforts on behalf of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We again reiterate our strong support for his mandate under the Dayton Agreement as the final authority regarding the interpretation of the civilian implementation of the Peace Agreement.

The United States joins members of the Council and the European Union Foreign Affairs Council in our continued support for the European Union peacekeeping force (EUFOR) mandate and would also like to commend the continuing work done by NATO through NATO headquarters Sarajevo.

The United States fully backs the EUFOR Althea mission, and we are pleased that today the Security Council has adopted resolution 2247 (2015), which renews all authorities, each and every one, and carries forward all prior Council actions on EUFOR, the Office of the High Representative and NATO.

We know that many in Bosnia and Herzegovina depend on the Dayton institutions and the Peace Agreement to ensure that their rights are protected. The presence of EUFOR, as well as the Office of the High Representative and NATO, provides reassurances that this trust is well founded and has the backing of the international community.

We look forward to the day when Bosnia and Herzegovina meets the objectives and conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council for the closure of the Office of the High Representative, but that day has not arrived. Again, that day has not come and the Security Council has reaffirmed that today. We encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders and all members of the international community to support the actions and reforms necessary to reach that milestone.

As the High Representative has noted, the adoption of the reform agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a good step towards that future; it must not be allowed to falter. The United States strongly supports the European Union's initiative to advance quickly those important economic and social reforms. We also continue to support Euro-Atlantic integration, as it is a cornerstone for security and stability in a previously troubled region.

This year we marked 20 years since approximately 8,000 people were slaughtered in the mountains of eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those who perpetrated that genocide must be held accountable. We continue to be disturbed by statements made by some political leaders and groups that deny that a genocide ever took place.

But let us be very clear: the escalating and divisive rhetoric coming out of the Republika Srpska, and in particular from Republika Srpska President Dodik. It threatens both the Dayton Agreement and the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In recent months, words and rhetoric have regrettably turned into action with the passage in the Republika Srpska National Assembly of a referendum law directly challenging the Office of the High Representative and State-level institutions. As the High Representative warned the Security Council in his September letter (S/2015/841, annex) and again in his briefing to us just this morning, the proposed referendum may represent the most serious challenge to the Peace Agreement in the last 20 years. It threatens to disrupt the achievements of the international community and of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina since the end of the war. The referendum is dangerous, it is anti-Dayton and it must not go forward.

We hope that constructive dialogue will prevail, including through the structured dialogue on justice. But no one should harbour any doubt as to the United States commitment and dedication to both Dayton and a Bosnia and Herzegovina that is whole and at peace.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is at a critical juncture. Twenty years after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has transitioned from war to peace. But we all know that peace is fragile and must be constantly nurtured by all who participate in the democratic sphere.

Two paths lay before the country, one of stagnation and division and one of prosperity and greater integration with Europe. The international community must support Bosnia and Herzegovina as it pursues the reforms necessary for a successful and stable future.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have listened carefully to the briefing by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko. His regular briefing on the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Agreement has confirmed that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are independently tackling and solving very complex

issues on their national agenda. They are doing so successfully, especially when they are not interfered with.

The priority task at this stage is to complete the implementation of the "5+2" agenda. Pending problems within that framework must be resolved by Bosnians themselves through inclusive dialogue and on the basis of the agreement of all three constituent peoples. The exclusive task of the High Representative is to promote such dialogue among the local parties and to assist in the search for common ground. However, the report of the High Representative (S/2015/841, annex) does not include a detailed account of what has been done in that area. Once again, the document lists only, in chronological order, all the events that took place in the country during the reporting period. Unfortunately, that is not an innovative approach, nor does it reflect the quality of the work undertaken. The analysis of the report is superficial and does not attempt to consider in depth the contemporary issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

First and foremost, this concerns the idea of Banja Luka to carry out a referendum of no confidence in the central Bosnian judicial bodies, which was actively discussed in the Chamber today. Instead of seeking and understanding the real reasons for the situation in which one of the constituent peoples justifiably state that their rights have been brazenly trampled upon, the High Representative limits himself to merely stating his view with regard to the violations of the Dayton Agreement. The document is drawn up in such a way as to leave one with the impression that the leadership of the Republika Srpska consistently does nothing other than violate the Dayton Agreement and impede and delay socioeconomic reforms with a view to splitting from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

That thesis, unfortunately, again is further backed by assessments of the April congress of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, where a decision was approved at the party level to carry out in 2017 the referendum on the independence of the Republika of Srpska if the violations of its legitimate rights continue. There is no reference at all to the plans of the other parties to turn Bosnia and Herzegovina into a unified State or the popular idea of the creation of a third entity. In other words, Serbians are not the only ones experiencing problems. Other constituent peoples are experiencing them as well.

In this situation, we call upon Mr. Inzko not to look for people to blame or those who are guilty, but to carry out his work on the basis of promoting national dialogue. Experience has shown that only through such national dialogue can one address serious concerns, especially in a complex State like Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We encourage and call upon all members to look very carefully at the documents. The arguments for holding a referendum are exhaustively spelled in a letter from the President of Republika Srpska, Mr. Milorad Dodik, to the Secretary-General. If members read President Dodik's letter carefully, the commitment of Bosnian Serbs to international law and the letter of the Dayton Agreement is unquestionably clear.

We would like to recall that the High Representative acts on behalf of the entire international community. His mandate derives from a Security Council resolution, which obliges him to keep his activities in line with the recommendations of this body. In practice, we are forced to note that none of our comments addressed to the High Representative were implemented.

We believe that the primary duty of the High Representative is to maintain an unbiased and balanced approach to his assessment of the internal political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focus on strengthening relationships of trust among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote genuine national reconciliation. That is the basis for the development of a single State in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Progress in that regard was noted today, within the framework of the upcoming anniversary of the Dayton Agreement.

We again underscore the lack of alternative to the further reduction of the budget of the Office of the High Representative as part of the closure process adopted by all of us. Arguments that he should retain the ability to carry out his mandate, especially in the light of what we have heard today, do not stand up to criticism. His work hinders the further development of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a modern European State that does not pose a threat to international peace and security and that deserves respect instead of external interference, which is close in nature to that of a protectorate. In that context, discussions regarding the Office's possible use of emergency tools or other instruments against the Republika Srpska are absolutely unacceptable and harmful.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I want to begin by thanking the High Representative for Bosnia

and Herzegovina for his very comprehensive briefing of the situation. I reiterate our full support for him and commend his work on the subject.

I also associate myself with the statement to be made shortly on behalf of the European Union.

France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2247 (2015), demonstrating that the members of the Council share the same fundamental principles regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina: support for the presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea, authorized under an executive mandate; respect for the commitment of the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to a European perspective for their country; the importance of respect for the international arrangements originating from the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement; and the need to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The unity of the Council around that common pillar sends a signal of peace to the region. It reminds us of the international community's agreement to support the independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as of its respect for that country's choices, provided that it respect international law and the framework set by the Dayton Peace Agreement.

As others have said before me today, 2015 is heavily symbolic for Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it marks the twentieth anniversary of the events of Srebrenica, which have been qualified as genocide by the ICTY and the International Court of Justice, and the anniversary of Dayton-Paris Accords. That dual anniversary reminds us of our common obligation. It highlights not only the great progress that has been made since the mid-1990s, but also how the factors that cause division can reappear at any time. In that context, France expresses its concern over the proposed referendum the authorities of Republika Srpska have referred to in recent months, aimed at challenging the competence of the jurisdiction of the central State. Such an approach runs counter to the spirit of the Peace Agreement.

Our position on this is clear. The Republika Srpska must comply with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is room for improvement in the functioning of the jurisdiction of the central State. The efforts undertaken in partnership with the European Union-led Structured Dialogue on Justice must speak to those issues. However, any viable solution can be achieved only through good-faith dialogue among the various compoents of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina — the central State and the Entities — in compliance with constitutional requirements. Political leaders have a crucial role to play in that regard. We call on them to abandon the outdated rhetoric of division.

France fully supports Bosnia and Herzegovina in its sovereign choice to move closer to the European Union. We are indeed convinced that the European integration can meet the economic and social aspirations of the population. That perspective is beneficial for the country and for the rest of the Balkans. Closer ties with the European Union are an expression of a decision made by the Bosnians themselves through their collegial Presidency. It is reflected in a commitment to economic, social and political reforms that paved the way for the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement on 1 June and the endorsement, a few weeks later, of the Reform Agenda for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2015-2018. The European Union will continue to assist the authorities in the implementation of those reforms. EUFOR Althea will continue its work in order to enable the Bosnian security forces to operate independently and to participate thereby in the consolidation of a pacific and forward-looking society.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite its fragility, seems to have taken the path towards normalization. The presence of the international community remains no less necessary at the present stage, and is firmly based on the framework of the Dayton-Paris Accords. We therefore call on all parties to cooperate with the institutions mentioned in the Peace Agreement, in particular, the Office of the High Representative and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. However, without undermining the founding principles of the Dayton-Paris Accords, our common goal should be to develop the international presence so that it is fully adapted to current realities. The reflection on the reconfiguration of the Office of the High Representative should therefore continue.

Twenty years after experiencing the horror of the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina is making strides in the right direction. The United Nations, European Union and regional partners must continue to show their presence, alongside that country in the same unanimous way that the Council has shown today.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I would like to thank High Representative Valentin Inzko for his briefing and for his comprehensive reports to the Council, including

the special report of 4 September. Listening to his latest update on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I cannot help but feel that despite the voluminous work and publications on the horrors of war, the lessons of war and human tragedies appear to have been ignored.

Twenty years ago this month, the conflicting parties in the Balkans war signed the Dayton Peace Agreement. The agreement was brokered and guaranteed by key members of the international community, endorsed by the Council and subsequently upheld by various Security Council resolutions. The Peace Agreement ended a devastating war that saw a level of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Europe unprecedented since the Second World War. Since then, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made considerable progress, reflecting the achievements of peacebuilding by the United Nations, in partnership with regional organizations. The international community has invested a great deal in rebuilding the country. Unfortunately, 20 years later, the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Balkans region, seems far from irreversible.

Malaysia is deeply concerned about the direct challenges posed by the Republika Srpska to the Dayton Peace Agreement, in clear violation of its international commitments. Last April, the President of the Republika Srpska declared that his political party would call for a referendum to secede from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018 if the party's demands, as they relate to the redistributing of competencies among levels of Governments, were not met. In another alarming development, last July the Republika Srpska National Assembly decided to hold a referendum, scheduled for this coming weekend, with the aim of challenging the authority of the Office of the High Representative, the rule of law and the judiciary of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such a decision is contrary to the country's Constitution and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

In addition, during the reporting period the President of the Republika Srpska continued to make irresponsible statements denying genocide in Srebrenica, in spite of the decisions of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. As we may recall from previous reports of the High Representative, the secessionist and nationalistic rhetoric of Republika Srpska politicians is not new and has been on the rise over in the past few years. However, the recent decisions adopted by the Republika Srpska authorities have effectively taken the matter to a disturbing new level, constitute the gravest violations of the Dayton Peace Agreement to date, and raise serious doubts about the future of the region. We strongly urge Republika Srpska authorities to respect the country's Constitution, various Security Council resolutions and the Dayton Peace Agreement, cease in proceeding with the referendum on 15 November, and renounce their divisive politics and secessionist agenda so as to avoid the further destabilization of the region.

Earlier today, the Council unanimously voted on resolution 2247 (2015), renewing the mandate of the European-led multinational stabilization force for another year. Malaysia welcomes the renewal of the authorization of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea operation and the unity shown once again by the Council on the matter. However, we regret the fact that several key elements of the previous resolutions have been removed or watered down in resolution 2247 (2015).

In particular, Malaysia views it more important now than ever for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to the Dayton Peace Agreement and its support for the Office of the High Representative, in view of the worrying developments on the ground. We reiterate the need to fully implement the "5+2" agenda as a condition for the closure of the Office of the High Representative. Until then, Malaysia reaffirms its strong support for the Office of the High Representative, as laid down in the Dayton Peace Agreement and upheld in various Council resolutions. Verbal attacks and personal insults against the High Representative and the staff of his Office are unacceptable and must immediately cease.

Malaysia takes note of the positive developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the reporting period. We welcome the increase in exports, foreign trade and growth projections for 2015, as well as the country's improvement in credit and business ratings. We also look forward to the country's upcoming membership in the World Trade Organization, which will further boost foreign trade and investment.

Malaysia underlines the need for the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to remain steadfast in its reform agenda, particularly with regard to addressing unemployment, fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law. After the collapse of the governing coalition in May, we hope to see political stability return to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite the political uncertainties in the entity, we commend the Federation authority for adopting the new labour law under its reform agenda.

Malaysia also takes note of the priority accorded by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to European integration as a cornerstone of its foreign policy with a view to achieving peace, stability and progress. In that regard, we welcome the country's movement towards that aim, especially the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union in June.

In conclusion, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the Dayton Peace Agreement and previous Security Council resolutions. We reiterate our unwavering commitment to contributing to the country's nation-building, reconciliation and economic progress. Malaysia has long supported Bosnia and Herzegovina in its reconstruction efforts and will continue to do so, especially in the areas of trade, investment and education, as well as through technical and defence cooperation programmes.

We urge all peoples to create a common space to continue building Bosnia and Herzegovina for a better future. That should be achieved by exercising collective responsibility and intensifying efforts towards national reconciliation and socioeconomic reforms to ensure peace and stability in the long-term interests of the country and the region.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to express our thanks and appreciation to the High-Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina for his briefing and for his report (S/2015/841, annex) on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as for the positive developments set out in his reoprt with regard to the programme of reform. However, we are concerned by the greater challenges that beset the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which contravene the Dayton Agreement.

We regret that certain parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the leaders of the Republika Srpska are sowing doubt about the General Framework Agrement for Peace by calling for a referendum on separation. We warn against such declarations, which could plunge the country into a dangerous crisis with serious consequences. We urge those who call for a secessionist referendum to abide by national legislation and norms and to work to achieve the development and progress of the country within the framework of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

All influential international parties should engage with the parties concerned in Bosnia and Herzegovina and should use their good offices to contain those worrying developments. The General Framework for Peace is the only way to achieve stability and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Stability in the Balkans in general will be achieved only through endeavours by all States in the region to establish good neighbourly relations and to bolster their cooperation at all levels. That will consolidate peace in the region. We therefore welcome the noticeably improved relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia, which have led to the signing of bilateral agreements in many fields. We also welcome the measures undertaken by the Bosnian authorities geared to implementing their obligations within the Stabilization and Association Agreement and to joining the European Union. Those measures will positively impact the livelihood of Bosnian citizens. We urge the Bosnian authorities to continue on that positive path and to implement the requirements for their integration into the European Union.

We pay tribute to the statement delivered by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the General Debate of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, in which he confirmed the determination of his authorities to improve the living conditions of citizens, promote the rule of law and establish an egalitarian society for all (see A/70/PV.22). We welcome the reform programmes undertaken over the recent period and urge the Bosnian authorities to intensify their efforts with a view to speeding up reforms, in particular with respect to the promotion of the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

We voted in favour of resolution 2247 (2015), which renews the authorization for the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina for another year. We pay tribute to those forces for their efforts to achieve a thriving and secure future for Bosnia and Herzegovina with the assistance of the Office of the High Representative, whom we commend and whose action we applaud. We stress the importance of the continued work of that Office, given the threats and dangers that beset the country.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing and report (S/2015/841, annex). The twentieth anniversary of the General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and

Herzegovina is an opportunity to encourage joint work in the search for a united, stable Bosnia and Herzegovina, where all communities of the country can live together in peace. National integration and reconciliation call for a shared vision for the country. For that reason, we welcome the adoption of the reform agenda for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2015-2018, which the Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 17 September.

We call once again for leaders to refrain from negative rhetoric, which invariably exacerbates inter-community violence, undermines cohesion, blocks national reconciliation and delays the country's progress. Civil society plays a key role in fostering understanding and dialogue to pave the way to peacebuilding.

We support Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to overcome its past, and we acknowledge the progress made by the Supervisory Board for the Implementation of the War Crimes Prosecution Strategy in tackling the pending cases. We also commend the efforts of the Office of the High Representative in support of the authorities for recognition and compensation to the victims of sexual violence. However, efforts must be made to continue supporting the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the exhumation, identification and restitution of the remains of the disappeared. Those are indispensable conditions for achieving national reconciliation. We reiterate the firm commitment that our country has had from the beginning to a stable Bosnia and Herzegovina, with institutions that work in the service of its people.

The presence of the multinational European Union military operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR ALTHEA) and the NATO headquarters in Sarajevo remain the guarantors of the country's social and political stability. That is why we have actively participated in the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea for more than 10 years and why we have supported the renewal of its presence in the country for 12 months. Similarly, we call on the international community to remain committed to the full implementation of the Dayton Accords of 1995. We hope that all authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to cooperate with the Office of the High Representative until the end of its mandate, in accordance with the Peace Agreement.

Finally, I wish to reiterate our support for the Office of the High Representative, which should continue to receive the political, financial and logistical support needed for the fulfilment of its important functions.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I join others in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Security Council, and thank him for his briefing. I would also reassure him of our full support.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU).

Our meeting takes place at an important moment for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide earlier this year reminded us all of the importance of continued reconciliation efforts in the region. Twenty years ago this November, the Dayton Peace Accord brought peace to the war-torn region. The international community through its engagement contributed to the security, stability and realization of the vision of a prosperous, multi-ethnic country which the Peace Agreement had outlined.

Through its positive agenda and prospects for membership, the European Union has provided an incentive for much-needed reforms for the countries in the region. Bosnia and Herzegovina's choice of Euro-Atlantic integration has been confirmed on numerous occasions and should not be questioned by anyone. Bosnia and Herzegovina has applied to and remains an aspirant for the NATO Membership Action Plan. In this context, we welcome the progress noted in the report of the High Representative (S/2015/841, annex) on registration of defence property and look forward to the completion of the remaining steps that would enable activation of the NATO Membership Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Important steps have been taken towards realizing the country's European perspective. Its authorities reiterated their commitment to European integration as a strategic goal. The Stabilization and Association Agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union has entered into force. A comprehensive reform agenda adopted at the State and entity levels in July offers a framework for addressing the most pressing social and economic challenges.

A crucial moment has come for all the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to live up to their responsibility before the country's citizens and embark on the implementation of this comprehensive agenda, with the aim of improving social and economic situation, strengthening the rule of law and enhancing administrative capacities so that the agenda is translated

into real benefits, jobs and opportunities for the nation. A properly functioning mechanism of the coordination of EU-relevant matters is of vital importance.

At this juncture, when consolidated efforts are most needed to advance the reform agenda, we are seriously concerned about the divisive rhetoric that threatens the future course of the country. We are also alarmed by the intention of the authorities of the Republika Srpska to hold an entity-level referendum on State-level judiciary. It is particularly troubling that such divisive rhetoric is used to pursue political objectives that run counter to the letter and the spirit of the Peace Agreement and threaten the very sovereignty and unity of the country, as noted in the special report of the High Representative. This may seriously damage the country's efforts to improve the life of its citizens and its progression on the EU accession path. Prospects for EU membership have been extended to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united country. We reiterate our commitment to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country — a country with a European future.

We believe that the shortcomings of Bosnia and Herzegovina's judicial system should be addressed through constructive dialogue. The EU has engaged in that regard through the Structured Dialogue on Justice. We call on all the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate with the Office of the High Representative with an aim of fulfilling the remaining conditions necessary for the closure of the Office. We also call upon all the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia as well as the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

Over the years the international community and this Council have stood with Bosnia and Herzegovina and greatly invested in creating security and stability in the region. We fully support the continued presence of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea with an executive military role to underpin Bosnia and Herzegovina's efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment. We welcome the renewal of the EUFOR Althea mandate by the Council today.

Both the words and the actions of the Security Council are being followed closely in the countries of the region. At this important juncture for the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Council should be united in condemning all actions that threaten the Peace Accords. It should support the Office of the High Representative. It should stand firmly behind Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country and in support of its Euro-Atlantic integration.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Valentin Inzko, for his briefing.

Twenty years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina has pursued its efforts to consolidate peace and stability at both the national and regional levels, although some challenges still need to be overcome if the full and effective reconciliation of all dynamic forces of its society is to be achieved.

Venezuela reaffirms its full support for respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and believes that the international community must continue to support the country in implementing the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace as a way to contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes between the actors concerned. In this context, we reaffirm that it is up to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to lead the efforts related to the fate of their country, in which process the various ethnic groups must resolutely work, through dialogue, for peace, human rights, cooperation and economic and social development. For this reason, we urge that the work of the High Representative in support of those efforts be fair, transparent and constructive. Moreover, such efforts should seek common denominators and be conducted in an impartial, balanced and prudent manner that reflects the opinions and views of all stakeholders.

The European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea has carried out its work under the mandate that has been given, in collaboration with the authorities, in order to ensure a safe environment for all ethnic communities. We therefore welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2247 (2015), which renews EUFOR Althea's mandate for 12 months.

In another vein, we are concerned about the violence that took place between April and October 2015, and we condemn it, in particular the terrorist act perpetrated against a police station in the town of Zvornik in the Republika Srpska, as well as attacks against citizens presumably on ethnic grounds. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts of senior authorities to prevent these unfortunate events from happening again and we call for dialogue and reconciliation in the interests of

peace and stability. Moreover, we welcome the adoption of the border treaty between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in Vienna in August, which emphasizes once again that dialogue and negotiation between the parties are the only way to peacefully resolve disputes. We hope that the ratification process for the agreement signed by both countries will end with success.

We reiterate our solidarity with and support for Bosnia and Herzegovina in its firm commitment to peace and stability in the country for the benefit of its citizens. With regard to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the armed conflict in the territories that belonged to the former Yugoslavia, we support the work being done by the International Criminal Tribunal charged with trying those responsible for such atrocities.

Finally, we call on all parties to redouble their efforts with renewed political will and courage to build confidence and joint work within the framework of international law, which are aspects necessary for a just and durable solution in the best interests of the parties and the entire region.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United Kingdom.

I welcome Valentin Inzko back to the Council and thank him for his briefing and report (S/2015/841, annex). I join others in reaffirming our full and continuing support for his role as High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption today of resolution 2247 (2015), renewing the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea. The deterrence and security it provides are fundamental during this period of reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The political and security situation on the ground remains worrying. Stability is not yet entrenched and, sadly, divisive ethnic rhetoric persists. That is why we welcome the Council's unanimity on this mandate renewal. We have sent a clear message today that the whole Security Council is committed to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the delivery of the reform agenda of the European Union (EU).

To be clear, the United Kingdom is committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's future membership of the European Union and NATO, and we are fully committed to helping it undertake the reforms necessary to achieve its goal of Euro-Atlantic integration. In that regard, I am pleased that the European Union was able to bring into force the Stabilization and Association Agreement earlier this year. We welcome the commitment made by Bosnia and Herzegovina's political parties to a substantive reform agenda that will stabilize the economy and improve the functionality of the State. We also welcome the progress made on the issue of defence property, which is needed for the entry into force of Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership action plan, a prerequisite for membership of NATO. We hope we will see continued progress in the coming months.

However, serious challenges continue to threaten Bosnia and Herzegovina's stability and security. Last month, the EU's Foreign Affairs Council strongly condemned the threat of a referendum in the Republika Srpska that questions the State-level judiciary and the powers of the High Representative. Threats of a referendum are divisive, anti-constitutional and contrary to the Dayton Agreement. There is a need to improve the justice system at all levels, and we welcome the recent steps taken by the European Commission to re-energize the structured dialogue on justice. That is the right way to address legitimate concerns, not through divisive threats. We are fully committed to the continuation of the Office of the High Representative until the completion of the five objectives and two conditions for its closure. The United Kingdom offers its full support to the High Representative as the final authority on the interpretation of civilian implementation of the Peace Agreement, and we support use of the bond powers if the situation requires.

I would like to close with a final reflection. Twenty years ago, and four months after the genocide of Srebrenica, the Dayton Agreement brought peace and the prospect of a prosperous, stable future. As we look back and remember how far the country has come, let us also look to the future and see how much more progress is needed before all the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina can benefit from the lasting prosperity and stability they deserve. That will be achieved only when all political leaders look beyond shortsighted, self-interested actions. Today those leaders should be struck, as I am, by the strength of concern in this meeting of the Security Council about any rhetoric or action that undermines Dayton. Significant work lies ahead, requiring strong and courageous leadership. I am pleased that today the United Kingdom and the

Council have committed to supporting the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in making that a reality.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and to wish you and your delegation every success. We welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have taken note of his forty-eighth report (S/2015/841, annex), covering the period from 21 April to 21 October 2015.

Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes the Council's adoption today of resolution 2247 (2015), which extends the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea for 12 months. The mandate of the EUFOR Althea mission, with a current strength of 600 personnel on the ground, is implementation of the military aspects of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, contained in its annexes 1A and 2. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina has now been calm and peaceful for a long period, which has had a positive impact on regional stability. During the past few years the EUFOR Althea mission has been reconfigured, and its focus has shifted from deterrence and ensuring a safe and secure environment to capacity-building and training, reflected in the conclusions on 12 October of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union (EU). I should also mention that we have had good, productive cooperation with EUFOR Althea in building the capacity and training Bosnia and Herzegovina's armed forces.

We have demonstrated that Bosnia and Herzegovina has come a long way. It has gone from being a security consumer to becoming a troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions and thus a provider of security for international peace and security. Today, military and police personnel from Bosnia and Herzegovina participate in many international peace operations, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Afghanistan, Liberia, South Sudan and Cyprus.

The adoption of today's resolution coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, which laid the foundations of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional and political system. The Agreement acknowledged Bosnia and Herzegovina as a complex, multinational State and reflected its unique historical and multicultural background. It has played an important role in post-conflict reconci'iation in the region as a whole as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like to highlight some positive developments that have taken place in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the reporting period. First, since the last elections we have seen the creation of a positive atmosphere that has made a major contribution to advancing economic and social reforms in the country and fostered progress towards its admittance to the European Union. In that connection, our Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU entered into force on 1 June, while the EU reform Agenda was adopted in July. The agenda stipulates the enactment of socioeconomic reforms including in the areas of fiscal policy, the rule of law and good governance, and constitutes one of the country's most significant steps forward of the past few years. Shortly after that, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a master plan for our integration into the European Union. The Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities are fully committed to maintaining positive momentum in this. The next step will be submitting our application for EU membership at the beginning of 2016 in order to acquire candidate status by the end of 2017.

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that since 19 May, Bosnia and Herzegovina has chaired the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, an organization that promotes and strengthens democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the continent. During our chairmanship, we focused particularly on the promotion and protection of human rights, with a special emphasis on protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. On 22 October, we signed the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. The Protocol is a significant step forward in the fight against terrorism, and it accords with the provisions of resolution 2178 (2014).

Thirdly, Bosnia and Herzegovina has continued to cooperate fully with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The ICTY's closure does not imply the end of my country's fight against

impunity. Fighting impunity at the domestic level is a prerequisite for achieving national reconciliation and long-term stability in the country and the region. In that regard, the implementation of a national strategy for processing war crimes, regardless of the national or religious origin of the perpetrators and victims, is of crucial importance to a complex, multinational State.

Fourthly, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fully committed to further bolstering cooperation among countries of the region. A special focus on regional cooperation has been included in infrastructure projects as a precondition of substantial economic development. In that regard, the positive trend continues and a number of important meetings have taken place at all levels with representatives of the Western Balkan countries. The most recent was an official visit by the delegation of Serbia, led by the Prime Minister, to Sarajevo, where a joint meeting between the Government of Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina took place on 4 November.

Fifthly, the country's economic and fiscal situation, as a result of global economic crises, remains difficult. However, economic indicators have shown some improvement. In the first eight months, export increased by 4.9 per cent; by July, industrial production had increased by 2.3 per cent, in comparison to the same month in 2014. July's unemployment rate decreased by 1 per cent, compared to the same period in 2014.

Finally, I would like to express the readiness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities to continue their work in securing a better and prosperous future for their citizens. At the same time, we would like to express gratitude to our international partners for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina on that path.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Vale de Almeida.

Mr. Vale de Almeida: Allow me, in my first intervention before the Council, to salute all of its members and to say how much I look forward to fruitful cooperation in the future.

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We thank the Security Council for adopting resolution 2247 (2015), renewing the mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) Operation Althea in Bosnia for one year. I join other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko back to the Council, and would like to express our full and continuous support for him and his role, as set out in the Council's previous resolutions. I would also like to welcome the new Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Miloš Vukašinović. I wish the Ambassador a successful tenure in New York and thank him for his statement.

The European Union (EU), emphasizing the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration, continues to work closely with Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance its stability, prosperity and European integration. This year is one of historic anniversaries, and a time when we are reminded of the country's painful past. It has also been an important year in terms of progress achieved. The European Union and the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have worked together to move the country forward towards the European Union. We welcome the progress achieved so far. At the same time, more needs to be done to ensure that a united, stable and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina can move forward towards prosperity and the European Union. Fostering good-neighbourly relations with all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighbours and other countries of the region is of vital importance in that regard.

This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU perspective was further strengthened. The Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Union, its member States and Bosnia and Herzegovina entered into force on 1 June. It is an important step forward. Contractual relations with the European Union have been reinforced, bringing Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU closer together economically, institutionally and politically. The Agreement opens a binding agenda for deep reforms that, as experience shows, will improve people's quality of life and move the country closer to EU membership. The confidence of investors, domestic and international, should increase and Bosnia and Herzegovina's businesses could further improve their access to the EU's internal market of some 500 million consumers, thereby providing their services across the EU and competing for public contracts.

The most comprehensive package of socioeconomic and judicial reforms ever in Bosnia and Herzegovina — the

so-called Reform Agenda — was adopted by the political leadership at the State and Entity levels in July. The Reform Agenda reflects the collective wish of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina for real change, greater prosperity, stronger rule of law and more opportunities. The EU and the international financial institutions will continue to support the implementation of the Reform Agenda, including by providing €1 billion over three years, and putting aside another €500 million for investment. That should encourage more private investment and boost the overall economy, creating more jobs and opportunities for everyone.

Meaningful progress in the implementation of the Reform Agenda, including the Compact for Growth and Jobs, will be necessary for an EU membership application by Bosnia and Herzegovina to be considered by the European Union. When requesting the Commission's opinion on the membership application, the Council will ask the Commission to pay particular attention to the implementation of the Sejdic-Finci ruling. Furthermore, ensuring efficient coordination on all EU-relevant matters is one of the main tasks facing the country. Such coordination should facilitate the decision-making needed in the EU integration process and serve as an effective vehicle to ensure domestic legislation harmonization with the EU acquis. Moreover, the EU urges Bosnia and Herzegovina to fully uphold its commitments and obligations under the Stabilization and Association Agreement, including those relating to the adaptation of the Agreement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made progress in the last two decades both domestically and in its relations with neighbouring countries. This year, concrete progress has been made on the country's EU path after a prolonged period of stagnation. But that progress must not be jeopardized by initiatives taken for short-term political purposes and misleading and harmful political visions. We call on the leaders and people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to refrain from divisive rhetoric, pull together and move forward.

We express our serious concern about the preparations for holding an Entity-level referendum on the State-level judiciary in Republika Srpska. Holding a referendum on the State judiciary in Republika Srpska would challenge the cohesion, sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which the leaders of all the main political parties represented in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliaments, including the President of Republika Srpska, are committed. Holding a referendum also risks undermining the efforts to make further progress in EU integration to which all political leaders are committed. It also distracts attention from the social and economic problems that people throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina face on a daily basis. Divisive and separatist rhetoric remains a cause for serious concern and is disruptive and a distraction from the reforms Bosnia and Herzegovina has to go through. Politicians need to focus their efforts on implementing the Reform Agenda, which is aimed at stabilizing the economy and create new jobs, particularly for young people, improve the rule of law and tackle corruption.

The shortcomings of the judicial system in Bosnia and Herzegovina should continue to be addressed and improved through constructive dialogue. The EU works with all relevant authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the framework of the Structured Dialogue on Justice, and stands ready to intensify its efforts to improve the performance and functioning of the legal system. We also call, on a more general note, on the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to continue to cooperate fully with all entities involved in the implementation of the Dayton-Paris Peace Accords, including the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

The European Union's deep engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is firmly entrenched and multidimensional. EU High Representative Vice-President Mogherini, together with Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Hahn, and in close collaboration with EU member States, will continue to carry out the EU commitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And we will also continue working closely with the High Representative, his Office and our international partners in our endeavours.

The European Union's strengthened political presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain in the person of the Head of Delegation/EU Special Representative, my colleague Ambassador Lars-Gunnar Wigemark, and his Office with a view to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in all EU-related matters, including by providing political guidance on military issues with a local political dimension to the EU Force Commander.

The European Union will also continue to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress in the security field and towards its national ownership. The overall security situation has remained calm and stable, yet stability has not been fully entrenched. The European

Union welcomes the continued presence of EUFOR Althea, which retains the capability to contribute to the deterrence capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities if the situation so requires, while focusing on capacity-building and training. In this context, as part of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU confirms its readiness at this stage to maintain an executive military role to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities in maintaining a safe and secure environment, under a renewed United Nations mandate. At the same time, the EU has agreed to keep Operation Althea under regular review, with a view to assessing progress on the conditions conducive to the delivery of its mandate. In this context, furthering the efforts of EUFOR Althea in the field of capacity-building and training could be considered.

In the context of the overall EU strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina, we look forward to continuing the discussion with the international community on the reconfiguration of the international presence, in the appropriate forum, and call on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet without further delay the outstanding objectives and conditions for the closure of the Office of the High Representative.

To conclude, 20 years since the Dayton-Paris Peace Accords, the European Union reiterates its unequivocal commitment to the stability and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign and united country. We welcome the adoption of an ambitious Reform Agenda in July, as envisaged in the December 2014 EU Council Conclusions, and the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. This positive momentum needs to be not only maintained, but intensified by all political leaders for a prosperous and European future of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its citizens. In that context, the EU, being a direct neighbour of Bosnia and Herzegovina, presents great opportunities for the country and its citizens. The European Union stands ready to further assist in this respect.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Let me start by joining other speakers in welcoming High Representative Valentin Inzko I would also like to express Croatia's appreciation for his briefing and comprehensive report (S/2015/841, annex), as well as for his hard work and dedication in carrying out his important mandate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the obsever of the European Union (EU), and I shall add several remarks in my national capacity.

In just a few days, on 21 November, we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. There is no doubt that the Agreement was a major diplomatic achievement that stopped the bloodshed and brought much needed peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also established a complex and specific political system based on ethnic representation, resting on genuine equality among three constitutive peoples. For Croatia, it remains the key element for the stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The territorial integrity, stability and functionality of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a sovereign and united country, are fundamental prerequisites for the stability and prosperity of South-East Europe.

It is therefore unfortunate and deeply troubling that the twentieth anniversary of Dayton is being marred by secessionist and inflammatory rhetoric that is not only politically unacceptable but also potentially harmful for the reforms which Bosnia and Herzegovina has to go through. We strongly oppose and condemn the secessionist statements and divisive actions that have been recently undertaken by Republika Srpska. We condemn the decision of the members of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to call for a referendum on High Representative decisions concerning the Court and the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Conducting such a referendum would have a detrimental effect on the sovereignty and integrity of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in clear violation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Furthermore, it would overshadow the Reform Agenda and pivotal socioeconomic issues waiting to be resolved. The legal uncertainty that would arise after the referendum could have multiple negative implications, including for security.

We strongly believe that the steady and forward-looking European integration process is the most efficient and constructive way to reach the internal consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and lay strong foundations for its prosperous future. Croatia firmly supports the new EU approach for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We fully support the ongoing engagement of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the new EU initiative for that country, and we hope that it will continue to support the implementation of much-

needed political and economic reforms that require the consensus of all political parties in the country.

The entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement on 1 June was is a first concrete step in the country's process of European integration and the first contractual relation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU. It paves the way for the two sides to work more closely together. The Agreement is a first concrete institutional framework for the implementation of all necessary reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to fully uphold its commitments and obligations under the Agreement, including those relating to its adaptation following the accession of Croatia to the European Union in 2013.

The adoption of the Reform Agenda in July, which is aimed at improving socioeconomic conditions and the rule of law and tackling corruption, is certainly a positive sign. It is an important step in the right direction, and all those who are carrying it should be supported and encouraged.

As far as Bosnia and Herzegovina's advancement to NATO is concerned, we believe that the intensification of the NATO integration process is also of importance to the stability and security of the country. We invite the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to intensify their efforts regarding the implementation of the six parties' political agreement on the issue of registering immovable defence properties and to work constructively to implement the agreement in order to start the first Membership Action Plan cycle for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina are vital to the security of the whole European continent. Therefore, Croatia continues to support the executive mandate of the European Union-led peacekeeping force Operation Althea. Its presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to serve as a support to the authorities in maintaining a safe and secure environment, if needed, in situations of security threats. It also has an important role in capacity-building and training.

In Croatia's view, the executive mandate should not be seen in any way as an obstacle to the country's process of Euro-Atlantic integration. On the contrary, it should be seen as a part of the comprehensive approach of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina and an important element of its commitment to the European future of the country.

Croatia advocates, and will continue to do so, for a sharp and permanent focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina at the European and international levels. That important country, with all its rich and often troubled history, and untapped potential, deserves our full and constant attention. We believe that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is within the community of States and nations of the European Union and NATO. We are ready to render our full support as a neighbour, friend and partner.

The President of the Republic of Croatia, Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, recently stated in Sarajevo that:

> "Bosnia and Herzegovina is Europe's treasure, which needs to be recognized and accented. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not Europe's problem, but rather an opportunity for affirming the idea of European cooperation and unity in diversity — a historical project of peace."

We sincerely hope that, 20 years after the end of the war that caused unspeakable atrocities — such as the genocide in Srebrenica, the twentieth anniversary of which we commemorated a few months ago — the twentieth anniversary of Dayton will be an opportunity not only to take stock of the past 20 years but, even more so, to look towards the future, the secure, stable and prosperous future that Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves in every way.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): At the outset, I would like to welcome Mr. Valentin Inzko, High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as today's adoption of resolution 2247 (2015).

Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only a next-door neighbour, but also one of the key partners of my country in the region. At a time when Europe faces numerous challenges, dialogue, understanding and cooperation in the Western Balkans and South-East Europe are perhaps more important than ever before. It is therefore only natural that the promotion of comprehensive relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of Serbia's priorities. The potential for cooperation between our two countries is enormous, all the more so as we remain committed wholeheartedly to achieving our common goals and set our sights on a positive vision of the future.

Serbia is a guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the twentieth anniversary of which we are currently marking. Twenty years ago, the Agreement was instrumental in ending the tragic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and established the basis for a peaceful and stable future and, just as important, for reconciliation. It was followed by economic and social recovery, development and progress in the process of European Union integration, as well as by the strengthening of neighbourly cooperation in the region. A good neighbour, my country was and remains open to close relations and joint activities with Bosnia and Herzegovina that bring us ever closer to membership of the European Union.

Serbia has always respected, fully and consistently, the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, an international standard of paramount importance. In that context, my country has been a staunch and steadfast supporter of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as provided for by the Dayton Peace Agreement. For the stability and development of that country, also the homeland of 1.5 million Serbs, and its regional and European integration have no alternative.

Over the past 20 years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has demonstrated that dialogue and agreement between its entities best address the issues that are important for its future. Active dialogue is needed today, too, just as is intensive communication, if differences are to be overcome. We firmly believe that all political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina are also aware of that need. We also believe that all the crucial decisions important for the future of the country should be arrived at as a result of dialogue and agreement among its entities and its three constituent peoples, as they reflect the interests of, and benefit, them all.

In that context, it should be pointed out that the holding of the referendum in the Republika Srpska on the judiciary of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an internal question to be resolved by dialogue among political actors, within the existing legal system of that country. After all, the creation of ever-greater trust among Serbs, Bosniacs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina is exceedingly important for joint activities and reforms conducive to the country's full membership of the European Union.

As a neighbour and an important partner, Bosnia and Herzegovina occupies an important place in the activities of the current Government of Serbia. It was, I recall, the first country that Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić visited after his election, and the political dialogue between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which my country invested significant efforts, culminated this year. Last week, a joint session of the Governments of the two countries took place in Sarajevo — indicative of the importance attached to the development of mutual relations. The session also focused on furthering good-neighbourliness and reconciliation and the quest for ways and means to promote cooperation and meet the expectations of the peoples of the two countries to live a better life.

Last July, the victims were commemorated in Srebrenica 20 years after the crime. Serbian Prime Minister Vučić also went to pay respects. Regrettably, he was brutally attacked at the Potocari Memorial Centre. Yet, well aware that senseless acts of violence must not be taken as points of reference for relations among States, and guided by the spirit of Serbia's avowed policy of friendship and cooperation, the Prime Minister invited the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to visit Serbia only 10 days after that incident. The occasion was used to reconfirm the resolve of my country to work just as hard and as undeterred as before on the promotion of good relations and cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina and to conduct dialogue on all issues, including those in respect of which differences exist. In addition to sending a strong message that the leaders of Serbia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina are responsible people who look optimistically to the future and have the well-being of their children at heart, the visit was used to sign three practical agreements in the field of telecommunication, the environment and cultural heritage, and a protocol on cooperation in the search for missing persons.

Also last May, Prime Minister Vučić participated in the Sarajevo Business Forum, alongside political and economic leaders from all over the world. He will also participate in the International Investment and Development Conference, scheduled to begin in Srebrenica tomorrow. In the spirit of a genuine collective commitment to the future, especially lasting reconciliation and a better life for all — and for young people in particular, which that conference symbolizes — Serbia is ready to help the local self-Government of Srebrenica by constructing a necessary public facility in the town.

Avowals of support for a cause or a policy may ring hollow and sound phony unless substantiated

by evidence that they help the cause and the policy succeed. Here, therefore, are some basic statistics.

In 2014, the overall trade exchange between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina amounted to €1.4 billion. In the period from January to July 2015, it reached €822 million. This year, Serbia's exports increased by 9.2 per cent and its imports by 9.6 per cent, as compared with the same period last year. The possibilities for increasing those amounts even further are manifold, especially with regard to investment in infrastructure development, energy, tourism, joint ventures and the defence industry. A joint approach to pre-accession assistance would help in that regard, too.

Serbia welcomes the decision of the European Union last June to de-freeze the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. A staunch advocate of European integration for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia views the possible submission by that country of its candidature for membership in the European Union in a positive sign. We are willing to strengthen mutual cooperation in that regard, especially through the work of the commission on the implementation of the action plan of the memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of European integration, the next meeting of which is to be held in Serbia in the first quarter of 2016. On a note of special satisfaction, let me point out that the Serbian presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe was delighted to see Bosnia and Herzegovina in the chair of the Council of Europe. As a very important forum in which to cooperate on addressing many important issues on the agenda of the two organizations jointly, it was also a sign of recognition of the level of stabilization and cooperation achieved in our region.

By way of conclusion, let me reiterate what my country has said many times over: we are committed to promoting ever-closer and the best possible relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. We treasure its stability and prosperity. For us, the policy of dialogue, good-neighbourliness and cooperation has no alternative.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

For future reference, I would like respectfully to remind all representatives that, when the microphone light starts flashing, it means it is time to stop talking.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.